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THE COUNTRY CHURCH

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# The Rural Church and the Farmer.

MOIRA, N. Y.  
MATTHEW H. DOWD







Methodist Episcopal Church, Moira, N. Y.

# The Rural Church and the Farmer

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# The Rural Church and the Farmer

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## CHAPTER I.

### *A Preachment.*

The editor of the American Review of Reviews in the issue of March, 1912, writing on "The Church's Need of the Efficiency Engineer," states: "Huxley once characterized science as trained and organized common sense. Recently the business man is having his common sense organized and trained to work in ways similar to those of science; and beyond the field of business into which the scientific method is now pressing writes Dr. Samuel Dike in the American Journal of Theology (Chicago) lies still another which it must of necessity soon enter."

Dr. Dike says: "The scientific method has long been at work in biblical study and theology, \* \* \* but strange to say it has made little progress in the kindred study of Church organization \* \* but no one who reflects on the subject can fail to see that the same motives that

have driven us to a large use of the scientific method in matters of religious thought, will inevitably compel us to take it with us into the problems of practical religious work." The Dr. adds: "Men of affairs accustomed to methodical systems by which they have the oversight of their own business easily arranged; and carefully distributed; do not lift a finger to secure like efficiency in their own churches."

This is particularly true in the work of the rural church; there is little or no concentrated effort and no understanding between the churches in neighboring villages as to what part of the rural districts each shall be responsible for in their ministry to the community. There is cause for rejoicing because of the interest in the social and religious life of our rural communities by those who lead in the study of agriculture. A notable instance of this is the work done in the annual conferences on the "Rural Church," held during Farmers' Week by the agricultural college at Ithaca. The addresses at these conferences have been of a high order, but the best thing in connection with the work is the recognition of the fact that the social life of the farmer is not complete when it is divorced from the church; or perhaps more properly from the religion of Christ for



which the church stands. Man is both a religious and a social creature. He cannot be at his best if he neglects the things that have to do with completeness in his soul.

The social life always involves the thought of self-denial and vicarious sacrifice. Jesus came to magnify in his own life both the religious and social elements in the life of man. Socially, one of the earliest acts of his ministry was to miraculously increase the happiness of the social hour at a wedding. In his teaching he spoke of our filial relationship to God and reminded his followers that their fraternal relationship to mankind was second only to that; and it was always to equal the desire for self-comfort and happiness. This being the case the development of man is not to be apart from his God or from his fellows.

It seems to be generally conceded that in a large measure aloofness has taken place in the rural districts of our country, however, it must be said that such a condition has come to pass not because the country people have lost confidence in the church; but for some other reason. Rare indeed are the cases where sickness and death enter the home, that the family do not turn to the church for sympathy, aid, and comfort. The fact is that while they appreciate the service the

church can render, they have commercialized their relation to it just as they have their relation to the grocery store; that is they purchase what they want; and pay only for what they get; and have no interest in it beyond that.

A gift to the pastor, who has called on the sick, and in case of death conducted the funeral, hardly approaches the conduct outlined by the teaching of Jesus. If all the people should follow this example the church of Christ would cease to exist because the spirit of Christ would have no place in the human heart.

During a ministry covering a score of years the writer has talked with many people of this class and almost invariably they state that their alienation is caused mainly by the fact that so many church members claiming to believe in the church and its mission, are so niggardly in financial support of its work. However, so far as our knowledge goes there is no difference God's call to service is the same to each; and the right way to have a harvest, whether spiritual, or material, is to bring all the tithes into the storehouse. The business of the church and the unchurched is to get together for the common good.

## CHAPTER II.

### *Who Is To Blame?*

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The rural church is not blameless nor does it claim to be ; and it has to its credit the fact that it is awakening to a sense of neglect ; and making an honest effort to improve conditions in its own peculiar field. In the midst of changing conditions it is feeling its way but must not much longer disregard the call to immediate action ; because of the irreligious condition of rural communities, that are but slightly remote from our villages.

We hear a clamorous call for activity on the part of the church. God grant that it may soon be seen, and its influence felt. But may it not be true that the church has been lacking in emotion. It seems probable that there has been too little preaching of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. L. G. Broughton in his book, "The Revival of a Dead Church," writes, "If we eliminate all the supernatural from our religion and our religious experience, as many are wont to do ; we simply reduce religion to a mere cold lifeless philosophy which would be very little better than that of Confucious or other teachers." I do not mean that shallow feeling "which

lacks the correlate of conduct; that human nature often assumes so readily; which sometimes leads to the grossest fanaticism; but rather the kind "which is directed toward right living," that comes to thoughtful and devout believers; who study to see the deep things of salvation; and whose hearts become animated with those profound feelings, which kindled by Divine Fire, and fanned by a holy enthusiasm, urges us to the task of redeeming a race." Might we not know an emotion; that born of faith in God; and moved with Christ-like compassion; would cause us with heaving bosom and trembling lips, to cry out it must be done.

The Rev. J. G. Patton, D. D. writing to one of the religious journals enquires:

"Has the ministry grown insipid, inane? Has it lost its savor? From some of the criticisms found in popular literature, one might conclude that such is the case with many ministers. They, according to their critics, have lost their grace, their grit and their grip. This "legion" (we are not sure that we can call them legion) has had no high ideals of their ministry. They have not had a vision of sin in the world. No more have they beheld the glory of redemption. Some may have entered the ministry with high hopes, but have had hard places and have battled by themselves without the aid of

Almighty God, and have been worsted. They have allowed their defeat to discourage and break down their spiritual ambition. They are contented to let the world take the church; and are discontented with their own chosen calling.

"The real ministry has not lost its place in the world and never will. So long as sin and suffering by sin endure, so long will the ministry be needed. Till the flood gates of hell are closed the church will have a warfare—both of offensive and defensive.

"Heroic men must enter the ministry. Their heroism must grow as they grow in years of experience.

"The warfare of the church of the present day is as strenuous as in any day of the past. A godless commercialism and materialism creeps over the people of God and invades the public sanctuary. Vast armies of men are too tired to go to church and too indifferent to pray. Their load is a heavy one, and in our greed for money that load may grow heavier. If men who are too tired to go to God's house to pray, would spend the hour of public service in their own private rooms praying to God in secret, the Church of Christ would not suffer so much and the souls of these men would not be in such danger of drying up.

"But greed and mammon are not the

only foes the minister of to-day has to battle against. There are a myriad of foes—all alert and ready to stand in the way of the kingdom of God on earth. These foes are to be found everywhere, in the city and in the country. We are appalled at the awful sins of Africa. We ought to sit in sack-cloth and ashes at the sins in Christian America and in our very churches sometimes.

“The man who takes up this work of the ministry will find an enemy well worthy of his highest ideal and strongest nerve force. No matter where he chooses his field, he will need to be courageous. If he goes to the country to take charge of a country field run down and out by the going away of many of the old and respectable church families, he will there find a field where courage, real courage, is needed as much as if he had chosen a parish in China. In speaking to a returned missionary from China, the writer found that the missionary thought the work of the ministry here in America was just as hard as it was in China. One’s physical life is not so much in danger here in America as in China, but his spiritual life may be in more danger. He is a hero who will battle against his own inner spiritual foes.

“The country church offers a fertile field for heroic effort. The young man

who will devote himself to a country field with the expectation of making that his life-work and who is determined to build up the church and make it the center of religious life for the community is as much of a hero and patriot as the man who goes to a foreign field. It will require high courage and consummate wisdom to meet his daily problems. This country pastor will train members for city churches. He will train foreign missionaries. From his sowing the future ministry will reap rich harvests."

In a recent issue of *The Christian Work and Evangelist*, the editor inquires "Is the failure all with the church?" He writes:

"Thus everywhere one is hearing of the failure of the Church to meet the problems of modern life. And the blame is almost always put upon the Church. One critic after another is shouting to her, Why do you not adjust yourself to the new day? Why do you not adapt yourself to the people who pass you by? Why do you not awaken out of your lethargy? Why not bestir yourself and conceive again a great revival of religion? From every quarter the blame of the apparent failure is put upon the Church.

"But is the failure all with the Church? May it not be that the failure is more with the people than the Church? May it not

be that it is the same old story of the Gospels, where Jesus failed because of the unbelief of the people? He could *not* succeed, do all he might, because of the unbelief of the multitude. We believe that never in any period of the world's history was the Church making more earnest effort than it is to-day both to reach the people and to build the kingdom of God. Men never preached the real Gospel more earnestly. In half a million churches next Sunday Jesus Christ will be truly preached. There never was so devoted and passionate humanitarianism manifested than the Church to-day is exercising. Never has the Church shown such enthusiasm for the kingdom of God in the world. But how can the preacher move men if they care nothing for hearing the Gospel? How can the Church work miracles if in all the people there is a deadening unbelief? How can the Church build the city of God if the people prefer Vanity Fair? Let us be frank about this whole matter. Is it altogether the blame of the Church that Christ is failing to-day? May it not be that it is because the people do not want the Church nor its Gospel nor its abundant life!" He concludes: "We get a little tired of all this talk about the Church adapting her message and her methods to the people as tho that were



all. Where no religious faculty is left a perfect Church labors in vain, just as a perfect Christ could do nothing before unbelief. A believing people would soon discover a miracle working church. To a people who desire Christ he will quickly manifest himself in glory. There is much talk about adjusting the Church to the people. This is well and good. But how would it do to talk a little more about adjusting the people to the Church?"

The residents of our rural districts have a responsibility toward the Church. God calls them to serve him, as surely as he calls any one now in his Church. Nor can they without hurt to themselves shirk from a strict performance of their duty toward their neighbor.

Prof. Starratt says, "The farmers of the land as individuals are not degenerates nor are they less religious than the farmer of the past in the days of the glory of the country church. He is still human and humanity wherever you find it is religious. \* \* \* \* He (the farmer) is too individualistic and seems to have lost or has failed to develop the power of organization."

Our village churches for some years have been busy with the struggle for a bare existence, many of our young people leave us for the city and the old "pillars" of the church are dying. Congregations

become pitifully small and many are discouraged so that in the midst of perplexity the needy neighbor has been forgotten. We recall the fact that when Job forgot his own trouble; and in his anxiety for his friends, interceded with God for them; then the Lord delivered Job. May it not be that the church has been so absorbed with internal problems, that the range of vision has been so narrowed that external needs and problems have been lost to the sight; and is it not just possible that its depleted ranks would have been filled, if there had been a consuming passion for the deliverance of those who suffered on the outside?

It cannot be that the rural pastor is entirely blameless; and yet it is possible that he is more to blame, because he has failed in promoting proper organization of the forces about him, than in lack of effort, for the rural pastor is usually a hard-worker. He must take the initiative, and if any construction work in the religious or social life is to be done, he has to be the man of the hour.

He has his discouragements too. Some time ago the "Standard" (Baptist, Chicago) published part of a letter, written by a discouraged pastor, who was obliged to quit the calling, because of insufficient support. Writing an old college friend:

“He says he has found ‘not a few earnest, unselfish, consecrated Christians,’ and thinks he is ‘not especially morbid or unfair’ in his estimate. But—

“ ‘Through all these years a conviction has been growing within me that the average church-member cares precious little about the kingdom of God and its advancement, or the welfare of his fellow men. He is a Christian in order that he may save his soul from hell, and for no other reason. He does as little as he can, lives as indifferently as he dares. If he thought he could gain heaven without even lifting his finger for others, he would jump at the chance. Never have I known more than a small minority of any church which I have served to be really interested in and unselfishly devoted to God’s work. It took my whole time to pull and push and urge and persuade the reluctant members of my church to undertake a little something for their fellow men. They took a covenant to be faithful in attendance upon the services of the church, and not one out of ten ever thought of attending prayer-meeting. A large percentage seldom attended church in the morning, and a pitifully small number in the evening. It did not seem to mean anything to them that they had dedicated themselves to the service of Christ.

“I am tired ; tired of being the only one in the church from whom real sacrifice is expected ; tired of straining and tugging to get Christian people to live like Christians ; tired of planning work for my people and then being compelled to do it myself or see it left undone ; tired of dodging my creditors when I would not need to if I had what is due me ; tired of the affrighting vision of a penniless old age. I am not leaving Christ. I love him. I shall still try to serve him.”

It would seem that the church, the ministry, and the people, ought to acknowledge their fault and get together to work for the glory of God and the common good.



### CHAPTER III.

## *The Country Church, A Statement of Conditions.*

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By Prof. F. A. Starratt, Hamilton Theological Seminary.

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That there is a problem of the rural church or a rural problem of any kind, seems to many strange indeed. That there should be a city problem, is no more than is to be expected, for do not all the evil and troublous things flock into the city? That they should arise there, out of the unnatural crowding together of all kinds of people, is not at all strange, but that the country should offer problems to be solved is altogether out of the nature of things. We have always thought of the people of the open country as the backbone of the nation, the source of all its strength and sweetness. Do we ever fail to remember that it was the farmers of Lexington who started the conflict that brought us liberty? Do we not constantly recount the fact that all the good and great of church and state have come from the farm? With this traditional ideal of

the country before us it is difficult to adjust ourselves to the thought of a really serious rural problem, especially one involving moral and religious factors. And yet there is a rural problem and there is a very pressing problem of the rural church. This fact may be brought to our attention in various ways. There is one fact, however, that brings it before us in a concrete way, and forces us to take it seriously.

It may be stated in a word; a very small percentage of the farmers of the land are in the habit of attending religious services of any kind. Organized Christianity is fast losing its hold upon the farming population of America. This is true even of our own state of New York.

As a result of the examination of the reports of the country and village churches of six Baptist Associations in the state of New York, it was discovered that they had lost twelve per cent. in membership during the last ten years. The gain in membership made by this denomination, during this period, was made in the cities and large towns. In the country the church had failed to keep pace with the population. Reports from thirty-two rural communities in the state show that less than twenty-nine per cent. of the population belong to any

church. A careful examination of fifty-three such communities in Pennsylvania, shows a little better proportion of church members, forty-two percent, but only twenty-nine per cent. could be counted as church attendants. A personal investigation of a section of rural Vermont, showed an alarming falling off of church attendance even where there was no such proportionate decrease in membership. The same general condition of things is revealed in an examination of a considerable country district of Missouri, which was conducted with great thoroughness by the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions.

Nor do these facts give the full significance of the situation so far as the farmer is concerned, for included in the studies are many towns and villages of five hundred and in some cases up to twenty-five hundred people. Often there will be a strong and prosperous village church, surrounded by a large farming community that is practically untouched by the church influence, very few of the farmers driving into the village for public worship. The empty horse sheds reveal the fact that the village church is losing its hold upon the farmer. It is becoming ever more apparent that the purely rural church is in a weak and unhappy condition. It would be superfluous to

continue to mass evidence as to the condition of the rural church in regard to membership and attendance. The result of all study of the matter point to the one conclusion, that the country church is losing ground, failing to meet its obligations and facing a crisis in its history.

This statement of the surface fact does not, however, make the situation clear, nor reveal the actual condition. One could conclude that the farmer is becoming degenerate and that he is no longer accessible to the Gospel or responsive to the appeal of religion. Or one might explain the fact by saying that religion is losing its power, that with the advancing civilization, man is learning to get along without religion. The latter explanation is refuted by the increase of religion throughout the country generally, and by the renewed interest being awakened in practical religious movements. The former explanation cannot be accepted by any one who knows the farmer as he is. The farmers of the land, as individuals, are not degenerates nor are they any less religious than the farmer of the past in the days of the glory of the country church. He is still human and humanity wherever you find it is religious. The American farmer is not immune to religious influences, nor is he less intelligent than his predecessors.



It is true that there has been a progress of selection going on in the farming community for many years but it is not evident that the result has been what it is often supposed to be. In the Eastern states two voices have sounded in the ears of the young people on the farm; the voice of the new West and the voice of the city. Many have obeyed these calls. Some have chosen to go, some have elected to remain. Sometimes it has been the resolute and ambitious who have been drawn away, sometimes it has been the shiftless and unsuccessful. While it is a matter that cannot be demonstrated, yet it is not clear altogether, that the individuals who have remained are not, in point of native equipment the equals of those who left, take them as they run.

The development of the two classes has, however, been different to say the least. The rural section of the country has not kept pace with the city in its social development. The city, in its development as a community, has forged ahead, leaving the country behind. This, however, may not be due, as is often assumed, to the fact that the individual in the city is so much more highly endowed than his country brother. We are coming to realize that environment has more to do with the development of the indi-

vidual than we had supposed. And it seems to be true that the change that comes over the country boy when he goes to the city is due to the environment into which he goes rather than to the fact that he is made of better stuff than the fellow who chooses to stay on the farm. The decadence of the country community and of the country church is not due to the fact that there is not good upon them by the various movements of the past years. With the introduction of natural material in the country, but due to the conditions that have been forced by machinery and the consequent revolution in the industrial world, the centralization of manufacturing, the bringing together of great masses of people, there arose a social condition that at once attracted attention, and has held the attention of the whole country ever since. It has not been the achievements of the city alone that has won for it this attention it has been in large measure, the troubles of the city, its unsolved problems, its threatened dangers. But whatever the cause, the fact is that the attention of the people has been focused on the city. Its social problem was a concentrated one, and one that demanded immediate action, so that the best thought of the world has been engaged upon its solution. Questions having to do with the great com-

mercial and industrial centers have monopolized the thought of the great masses of the people. During all this time the farmer has been living quietly upon the land. He has had his troubles also, but because these troubles were widely distributed and did not lead to any serious disorders, they received little or no attention. In fact his own mind was continually being drawn away to the city questions. His newspaper brought him chiefly news of his city brother, and the city man's troubles were kept ever before him and his own seemed small in comparison with those, which though affecting in the aggregate, a less number of people, yet because of being concentrated in a narrower compass seemed larger and more important. As a consequence, the city has advanced rapidly, in the past years, in the understanding of its social duties and responsibilities, while the farmer has made practically no steps toward the solution of his equally important though less spectacular problem of social life. During the past ten years the farmer has made progress financially, he is making money, and as an individual he is bringing into his life some of the better things that belong to the modern world, but the social condition of the community in which he lives has made no advancement but has rather gone

backward. The modern conveniences, that have come to him, have been of advantage to him individually, but it is questionable whether they have aided in any way to build up the community in which he lives. The free mail delivery brings him in closer touch with the outside world, but it does not often bring to him anything very helpful for the world in which he actually lives. The trolley takes him to town for his recreation, and the telephone gossip takes the place of the old-time neighborhood visits. The chief influence of these things seems to be to make him more independent of his immediate surroundings, whereas what he needs is, to be thrown back upon them more, so that he will take the trouble to make them more attractive and serviceable.

The problem of the country is no longer chiefly, whether one can make a living there, it is rather, can life be made as rich and full, as well worth while, in the country, as the needs of true human life demand? Can the life on the farm be made to contribute to the well-being of man as is demanded by the best interests of that life. This has not been done, and is not now being done as a rule. Country life is fatally at fault at this point. Life on the farm is usually a weary round of toil with few things to quicken the social

or the intellectual nature. If these things are felt to be needed, by any one then the natural thing has been to look beyond the country for them, to the city or the large town. The fact that the farmer is now able to go to the city for his pleasures, has been hailed by him and his friends as the dawning of a better day. The result is, however, that there is no serious attempt being made to supply these things in the community in which he lives and as a consequence the rural community has suffered in its common life, social institutions have fallen into a state of decay, the church along with the rest of them.

While we recognize that there has been a lack of attention to the social side of his life, we must not conclude that the farmer himself has not changed, for he has. We must not overlook this fact. We need to clearly perceive that the country church is confronted by a new situation. The old days are gone and they will never return. There is material in the country for strong and vigorous churches, but they will not be like the churches of the fathers. The people of the country have not been standing still all these stirring times. They are a new people and will have to be appealed to in a new way, different from that to which their fathers responded so well.

The farmer has participated more or less in the change that has come over the world in the past twenty-five years. Only once or twice in the history of man has there been such a revolution in human thought, as we have witnessed in our own day. This change in the way of looking at things has found its way into all classes of society. All people are not clearly conscious of the change, nor in what it consists, but they dimly feel it and its presence can be detected, by observing the different interests that appeal to them. It can be seen, too, in the attitude which they assume toward many of the questions of the day. Religion, as well as other phases of life, has been affected by this new attitude. While in its essence religion is what it has always been, yet in the way people conceive it, a great change has come. If any of you feel inclined to doubt this statement, turn to one of the sermons of Jonathan Edwards, and imagine yourself reading it to a modern congregation. Now the farmer has entered more or less fully into this new thought, he shares more or less fully with the rest of the world in this new outlook upon the world in which he lives, the world of religion as well as the world of nature. This has been forced upon him to some extent by the new method by which he does his work. This has

been admirably stated by Director Bailey, (The State and the Farmer, 13). In describing the changed method of farming, he says: "This change is even more remarkable in the farmer's attitude toward the reasons that underlie his work, although this shift does not appeal much to the popular imagination. His attitude toward soil fertility has undergone a complete change, so has his attitude toward the feeding of animals, and the treatment of their ailments; so has it toward the diseases of plants and toward insects. He speaks a new language. Even when the old farm shows no visible change in external matters, the farmer himself cannot avoid attacking his problem in a new way. Butter-fat is a reality. There are new crops on the land. If he lives in the northeastern milk-market section, he has seen the red and brindle cow change to the black and white; he has developed the winter production of milk and has made the silo a part of the farm scheme. He has a new conception of cleanliness, as a result of his study of bacteria. He has a rational outlook on potato-blight and oat-smut and codlin moth. He has respect for ideas in print, because the ideas are worthy of respect. All this changes his method of work." And all this changes his attitude toward all the questions that come to his attention. The farmer has

not passed uninfluenced through the changes that have been going on in the world about him. He belongs not to the world of the fathers but to this present modern world in which we all live. Perhaps he least of all is conscious of the change that has come over him, but whoever is going to deal with him, will make a tremendous mistake if he overlooks the fact. But strange as it may seem, while the farmer himself has changed, and the method of doing his work has changed, all in the general direction of the world movements about him, the community as such, in which he lives has not shared in this general movement.

While in the new order into which he has come, there is a strong emphasis placed upon the social side of life, a clearer recognition of the fact that man is not an individual who can come to his true estate by himself, but a person who can only come to his best in social relations, by the help of his fellows, yet the farmer has remained extremely individualistic in practice at least whatever he may be in theory. In the old days, there was none too much of social life but what there was has been allowed to disappear without anything coming in to take its place. There used to be singing school in the long Winter evenings, where the young folks could get together and find



social intercourse. There were apple-parings and husking-bees, and barn-raising, and various other neighborhood gatherings, these have all gone and the average farming community is left bare of any social interests at a time when they are recognized as being real needs of human life as never before. The country community has disintegrated, it is disorganized, and the farmer seems to have lost or has failed to develop the power of organization.

In this general neglect of social interests and the concentration of attention on the purely individualistic side of life, the church has shared the fate of other institutions. Its depressed condition can only be understood in the light of the whole situation. It has not failed singly, it has not suffered alone, it has simply gone along with the whole movement, the tendency of which was not perceived until its effects became only too apparent.

Now while the above statements are a result of an inductive study of the facts and it can be shown that the church has actually waned with the falling off of the social interest and continues weak wherever the social instinct has no opportunity to express itself, yet I think there is a real connection between these two phenomena, that they do not simply hap-

pen to be contemporary events but there is a logical connection between them. Religion itself is very closely allied to the family and social life. The religious feelings are intimately related to the feelings aroused through social intercourse. The yearning of the heart for God is not unrelated to the yearning of the heart for human sympathy and fellowship. The dependence on God which we feel is allied to the dependence upon one another of which we are constantly aware. The development of religion has been conditioned in all its history by the social life, especially is this true of the forms of public worship. It is largely the social instinct that brings people together for worship. When there is a revival of religious interest and an increase of the religious impulse, it usually seeks to express itself in some form of social activity. Hence it seems to me, to be very clear that there is a very close relation between the two facts, that we have found to be contemporaneous, the deterioration of the social life in the rural communities and the decline of the churches in the same communities. The church has accompanied the community in its mistake, and shares in its punishment. For it is to be noted that, during this time, when the city was intent upon social betterment, and the rural commun-

ity seemed blind to its duty, the church made no effort to supply the need. It too appeared to be oblivious to the conditions which were growing up about it. It continued using only the old methods of work, doing the same things that had been done in the past, blind to the fact that the conditions that made them effective were passing away, and also blind to the new needs that were growing up about them. And even yet only a few churches have come to see that their own continued existence depends upon arousing some sort of social feeling among the people among whom they work.

If this analysis of the situation is correct then we have the line indicated along which the forward movement must proceed. If the welfare of the church is bound up with the social condition of the community, then the church must for its own sake, if for no other reason, set itself the task of social reconstruction.

This same conclusion can be arrived at from another point of view with equal force. The function of the church is to build up the life of the community in every way possible. It is to co-operate with God in all his endeavor for the welfare of men. Every activity for the betterment of man lies within its sphere.

The church should be behind every movement for the good of the world, directly, if no other agency is doing the work; indirectly by sympathy and co-operation if some other organization is doing the thing that needs to be done. Now all students of the rural problem are agreed that country life needs the spirit that will make co-operation possible. It needs the cultivation of the social side of the farmer, something that will modify his excessive individualism. If then the church is ready to do the thing that most needs to be done, on its own field it will apply itself to the task of reconstructing the social life of its community. The rural church has not declined because there is any less genuine piety in the pulpit or in the pew, nor because the lines of work to which it has been accustomed have been pushed with any less fervor or consecration, but because the conditions under which these methods of work are effective no longer exist. A strong church cannot develop in a place where there is merely a collection of individuals. It needs the social bond.

This being so the task of the country church, as I conceive it, is to reconstruct the social life of the community in which it finds itself. *Not to redouble its efforts along the old lines, but rather to face a new task, new for the country church of*

recent years, but not new in the history of the church in the early days of America. In the days of the Puritans, back to which we look as to the golden days of the rural church, we find that the church was the social leader, the influence that moulded the public life of the early township as well as of the state. So it is not a new task but it is under new conditions, and must be met with new methods, methods that are adapted to the new thought of the age that confronts us.

This task, of reconstructing the rural community is one for which the church is especially fitted. It is of the very essence of the Gospel, and needs for its accomplishment the spirit of the Christ.

It sounds like a formidable undertaking, to talk of a church setting itself the task of reconstructing the social life of a community, and it is in one way, it is a man's job, it requires tact, patience, perseverance, and some degree of the initiative. But it is not an undertaking that demands a large outlay of money nor the introduction of agencies not already engaged in the ordinary church work. It calls merely for a new direction of these forces. It is a matter that cannot be forced nor that can be foisted on a people, it must grow up naturally out of the situation. Some real and obvious need must be supplied out of the

resources latent in the place. Whatever is done must be done with the material at hand. The farmer is not an object of charity nor is there any necessity of outside aid, it would not be of any permanent good if it were provided. One thing the situation does need and that is a leader. There are few leaders in the country, few men who have won recognition for themselves so that they can wield an influence over their fellows such as this movement requires. The farmer is of all men hard to lead, his isolation, his independence, his extreme individualism, makes him suspicious of all attempts at combination under the leadership of another. This very thing has prevented the farmer from forming combinations by means of which he could make his influence felt and secure for himself the recognition which his numbers and place in the world deserve. Now the church has the power to bring a man into the community, who has been trained in leadership, or who should be so trained. He is given a place in the community where he can win for himself the place of leadership, without arousing suspicion or serious opposition. To him in a peculiar way belongs the task of leading in the reconstruction of the rural community and the fate of the country church is largely in his hands.

In making this statement of the conditions of the rural church problem, I have confined attention to one element of the situation because I feel it is the central thing in the whole matter. I am not forgetting that the ministry of the church is a spiritual one, that it has to do with the religious side of life, my contention is, simply, that the conditions under which the specifically religious or spiritual work can be done to the best advantage are not present now in the rural districts, and that the decline of the rural church is due to that fact. I wish further to emphasize the thought that the sphere of work that we call religious or spiritual is perhaps broader than we have been in the habit of thinking. That it includes many of the elements that are now lacking in the country communities. Hence the need of reconsidering our church work from the point of view of the needs of the people among whom we labor.

## CHAPTER IV.

### *Factors That Determine the Efficiency of the Country Church.*

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By Professor G. W. Fiske of Oberlin  
College.

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Before we can answer our question with any degree of satisfaction, a point of view must be agreed upon. We must not begin to discuss factors until we accept *ideals* of efficiency. We must first discuss the question *What is Country Church success?* Then we shall be ready to discuss the ways that win, and the factors that must be made effective.

We could easily trace a real evolution in the ideals of country church efficiency; and several of the different stages may still be found extant. The pioneer type of the circuit-rider church may still be found among the mountains. Its ideal of success is very simple; a monthly preaching service when the elder makes his rounds; and an annual revival, or protracted meeting, in which the leader



"prays the power down" and all hands "get religion,"—presumably enough to last them through the year. For this kind of success only three factors seem to be essential, a leader with marked hypnotic power, an expectant crowd ready to respond to his suggestion, and a place to meet. But real results are often meagre and the same souls have to be saved next year.

Most churches have passed beyond this low ideal of success. They plan a more continuous work. They desire something more than merely emotional results. They appeal to intelligence as well as the feelings, and plan definite courses of Bible study. They appeal to the will and make the culture of Christian character the great objective. Such work is vastly important and wins our respect as work worth while. But a still higher standard must be raised for country church success.

A few weeks ago I received from an ambitious and active country minister,—who evidently wanted a city church,—a tabulated, typewritten statement of his work for the year. According to widely accepted standards it was evidence of his efficiency and the success of his church. It gave the number of sermons he had preached, the calls he had made, the prayer meetings he had led, the Sunday

School sessions attended, the number of conversions and additions to his church membership, the number of families added to his parish roll, the number of people he had baptized, married and buried; the average attendance at all services, the size of his Sunday School, the amount of money raised for church expenses and for benevolences, the sums expended for repairing the property,—for all of which we were asked to praise the Lord. It was a praiseworthy record and on the strength of it this particular country minister was called to a city church! He will not be any happier there, and his salary will not go any farther there, and he will probably have less influence there; but he has attained the dignity of a *city* minister, the goal of many a man's ambition. Alas that so many ministers seem to forget that the Garden of Eden was strictly rural; and that it was only when mankind was driven out of it that they went off and founded cities!

I mention this case simply because it is a typical one. We are still too apt to reckon the success of a church in statistics reported in the denominational Year Book. The book of Numbers is a poor Gospel. I would not for a minute disparage the importance of adding forty people to the church membership, or doubling the size of the Sunday School, or

tripling the benevolences, or increasing the congregation. These things are all splendid, every one of them, and indicate a live church and an active, consecrated minister; but they are not ultimate tests of a church's efficiency.

We shall be honest enough to admit that the real business of a Christian Church is not to swell its membership roll or to add to the glory of its particular sect or to raise enough money for its own support and keep its property painted, nor even to get the community into the church. The business of the church is to get the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ into the community. If it is not doing that it is not succeeding. It is certainly succeeding just in proportion as it is accomplishing that; for its business is to Christianize that community. I believe Dr. Gladden is right when he says that the test of efficiency of the church must be found in the social conditions of the community to which it ministers. To be sure the church may well emphasize evangelism and the need of church membership. Let it add to its strength, in order to become a strong, effective organization. But let it remember that this is but a means to an end. Let it keep in mind the great object of its work, to *Christianize its community*.

I would say then, a country church is

efficient if it not only gets its people "right with God" but also right with one another; if it not only saves them for the life of heaven, but helps them to begin the heavenly life right now; if it not only furnishes opportunity for the worship of God, in simplicity and truth, but also proves the sincerity of its worship in deeds of Christian service; if it furnishes spiritual vision and power, faith, hope and love, those unseen things that are eternal but also mints these essentials of religion in the pure gold of brotherly sympathy and kindness.

The efficient church will not only perform the priestly function of mediating between God and men, until in the holy place men feel the hush and peace and power of God's presence. It will also inspire men in a practical way to perform the duties of life. It will increase the kindness and brotherliness and sympathy of men and women toward each other. It will stimulate fair dealing in all business relations and put an end to injustice toward the weak. It will help to reduce poverty, vice and crime. It will encourage pure politics and discourage graft. It will set a high standard for the play life of the community and make amusements purer and more sensible. It will even endeavor to raise the level of prac-

tical efficiency on every farm, making men really better because they are real Christians. It will help to make more efficient homes and schools, to give every boy and girl a fair chance for a clean life, a sound body, a trained mind, helpful friendships and a useful career.

The efficient country church will definitely serve its community by leading, when possible, in all worthy endeavors for the general welfare, in arousing a real love for country life and loyalty to the country home; and in so enriching the life of its community as to make "country living as attractive for them as city living, and the rural forces as effective as city forces."

In a notable address at Oberlin College two months ago Director Liberty H. Bailey said: "I feel that the center and the core of the Country Life Movement is essentially religious. Whatever your theory of life may be, every soul must begin where Scripture begins: IN THE BEGINNING GOD." He was right. Fundamentally the Country Life Movement is a great religious movement for the redemption of the land and the people who live upon the land, yes, and the redemption of the nation, sixty per cent. of whom still live upon the land. Shall we not agree that the country church is efficient in proportion as it

serves God and the people in leading the rural forces in this great redemptive movement, and thus brings in the Kingdom of Heaven in the Open Country?

Surely this matter of country church success is no simple, easy problem. It is complex enough to be fascinatingly interesting. Its very difficulty is beginning to challenge strong men. Let us look into the problem and see if we can factor it. In enumerating these factors which in my judgment determine country church efficiency, I do not undertake to mention any but the most essential. The list might be continued indefinitely. Neither do I mean to infer that many of these important factors are absolutely essential to a measure of success for the church. Churches are fairly successful that lack several of them. It is a question of proportion. They would be still more successful if they developed these factors that they lack.

### I. *PEOPLE.*

It is very evident that the first essential factor is *PEOPLE*. One reason some earnest ministers prefer to work in the city is because there are more people there. A congregation to lead in worship and to inspire with ideals for Christian service is quite essential. A minister must have people to whom to minister.

Church can live without bells, organs, pulpits, fine architecture, or even ministers for awhile. We can sing without hymn books or choir; pray without missal, prayer book or surplice; worship comfortably without cushions or carpets; commune without silver plates or golden chalices or individual glasses; baptize without any baptistery; and pay the minister "in kind" instead of money! The one thing which is the *sine qua non* is a congregation. The church must have people.

This does not mean that success will depend upon great numbers, though depleted numbers cause serious discouragement. A country minister has a splendid chance for a thorough, *intensive* work with individuals and families, which is denied a pastor with a larger flock. Yet the churches must have a constituency or it is not needed and of course cannot succeed.

## 2. LOCAL PROSPERITY AND PROGRESSIVE FARMING.

Some one may say, "Why haven't you mentioned first of all the blessing of God, as the great essential to success?" Surely unless the Lord builds the house he labors in vain that builds it. I am simply assuming this as an axiom. I am not enumerating it, for it would not be a con-

structive suggestion. Our work must always be done in partnership with God. Success itself is the evidence of His favor. To win that favor we must take the natural steps to win success.

My second suggestion is LOCAL PROSPERITY AND PROGRESSIVE FARMING. Dr. Wilson calls the country church "the weather vane of community prosperity." It might be more accurate to call it the *barometer*, for the church shows promptly the degree of the pressure of economy due to poor crops or bad farming. Impoverished soil, poor agricultural conditions and bad farming explain the failure of many a country church. You can build a city on the rock (like New York) or even on the sand (like Gary); but you cannot hope to build a prosperous country community or church on *poor soil*.

Professor Carver tells us forcibly that "the world will eventually be a Christian or a non-christian world according as Christians or non-christians prove themselves more fit to possess it,—according as they are better farmers, better business men, better mechanics, better politicians." It is certainly the wisest kind of policy for the church to help to make its community prosperous. It is not only a fine way to serve the community. It is a prime essential to its own ultimate suc-



cess. Many a rural church is languishing because of bad economics in the community. Let it face the problem man-fashion and do something besides pray about it. Let it prove the sincerity of its prayers by earnest plans and deeds to make its community prosperous.

This is exactly what was done in a certain Wisconsin village. By the fiat of the railroad, which suddenly changed its plans, half the people moved away in a day, leaving community institutions maimed and everybody discouraged. It was the wise minister who saved the day by organizing the farmers and planning with them a new local industry. He induced a pickle factory to build in the community, provided the farmers would raise cucumbers on a large scale. He was even able to turn the village store into a co-operative enterprise which succeeded in running at a profit. This minister saved his church by saving the community.

That prince of country ministers, John Frederick Oberlin, laid the foundation of his 64 years of pastoral success in the Vosges mountains in the new local prosperity which was developed under his leadership. He was utterly unable to succeed until he had taught his people how to become better farmers, and thus to rise above the low level of in compe-

tence and ignorance which had kept them almost immune to religious appeals and had kept their churches pitiable failures. His astonishing success won for him the official recognition of the Legion of Honor from the Third Napoleon. What he was able to do under great difficulties could be done to-day by thousands of rural churches and ministers, if they determined to do it. Let them first make their community prosperous; then their church will share the prosperity.

### 3. *Community Socialization.*

Prosperous and happy rural communities have outgrown the selfish independence of the pioneer past and have learned how to live together effectively in a socially co-operative way. But a great many rural places are still scourged by grudges and feuds and other evidences of individualism gone to seed. This accounts also for many small churches, the result of church quarrels. Many country churches cannot succeed until the people learn how to live together peaceably and effectively, to co-operate in all details of the community life, to utilize the various social means for community welfare. To be sure the church can greatly help in this socializing process. It can lead in making the local life co-operative, educationally, agriculturally, socially, morally; and, if it succeeds, it

will be the first to reap the rewards of a finer comradeship.

#### 4. *A Community-Serving Spirit.*

Many a country church is dying from sheer selfishness. The same of course is true in the city. Many people doubtless think the church exists for the benefit of its members only. If this were true, the church would be simply a club. Selfishness is slow suicide for an individual. It is equally so for a church. A self-serving spirit in a church is contrary to the spirit of Jesus and it kills the church life. It is a bad thing for a church to have the reputation for working constantly just to keep its head above water, struggling to keep alive, just to go through the motions of religious activity, yet making no progress. Many a church is dying simply for lack of a good reason for being. Can you not hear the voice of the Master saying "The church that would save its life shall lose it; but the church that is willing to lose its life, for my sake, the same shall save it."

Let the church adjust its progress to a larger radius. Let it be a *community-wide* program. If there are other churches, it will of course not invade the homes of families under their care. But aside from this, it will plan its work to reach out to all neglected individuals as

well as to serve all social and moral interests of the community as a whole. Let its motto be "We seek not yours but you." The church will not be able to save the community until it proves its willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the community.

5. *A Broad Vision of Service and Program of Usefulness.*

This next factor making for efficiency is very closely related to the last. A *useful* country church will not die. A church that is really serving its community in vital ways will so win the appreciation of the people that they will support it because they love it. Some churches and ministers are too proud to include in their program anything but preaching, praying, hymn-singing, with an occasional funeral, wedding and baked-bean supper to break the monotony. In a social age like this, with multiplying human needs such a church is on the way to death. The church must recognize its responsibility, as its Master recognized it, to meet all the human needs of its people. Many country communities with meager social equipment, often with manifold human needs absolutely unmet, demand the broadest kind of brotherly service on the part of the church, for their mutual good. The church need not do everything itself as an institution. Its work will ever be

the work of inspiration. But where there are serious gaps in the social structure, the church must somehow fill the gaps. It must do the work or get it done.

It rejoices us to find many churches all along the country side to-day that have welcomed this great opportunity for broad usefulness. We all know how splendidly Mr. McNutt and his church in Illinois have illustrated this, and have gained a new vitality and an increasing success by facing all the needs of the community and broadening their vision and program of service accordingly.

#### 6. *United Christian Forces in the Community.*

We are confronted now by one of the most serious factors in our problem. The pitiable sub-division of rural Christendom into petty little struggling, competing churches makes religion a laughing-stock and a failure. We are saddened by it. We ought to get so ashamed of it that we will stop it! Many men of leadership and influence are working on the problem and we can see improvement in many directions.

Wasteful sectarianism is a sin in the city; but it is a crime in the country. It is a city luxury which may be justified perhaps where there is a wealth of people; but it is as out of place among the

farms as sheet asphalt pavements or pink satin dancing pumps. Sectarianism is not religion. It is merely selfishness in religion. A sincere country Christian will be willing to sacrifice his sectarian preference as a city luxury which the country cannot afford.

Blessed is the rural community that has but one church. Where there are several churches, let them work together as closely as possible. They should present a united front against the forces of evil, in an aggressive and optimistic campaign for righteousness. Local Church Federations, and township or county ministers' unions greatly help to develop a real spirit of unity. A local federation of men's church brotherhoods which unites all the church men of the township is a splendid thing and speedily puts friendliness in the place of suspicion and enthusiastic co-operation in the place of jealous competition.

7. *A Broad Christian Gospel in Place of Sectarian Preaching.*

One of the signs of a decadent church is excessive emphasis upon sectarian trifles. When adult S. S. Classes have not studied the lesson for the day they fall back on denominational hobbies! A holy zeal for righteousness costs something. The selfish zeal for one's sect

is cheap. The country is scourged by petty sectarian teaching both in the pulpit and in the Sunday School, and the country is very tired of it. Ordinary mortals are simply bored by it and will no longer come to hear it.

People are still hungry for the real gospel. The great affirmations of religion: The priceless value of human life, The reality of God our loving Father, The immortality of the soul, The law of the harvest, The gospel of a Savior, etc., still challenges the attention and win the hearts of men. Let us emphasize the great Christian fundamentals on which most Christian people heartily agree. Let us add to these high teaching of universal Christianity the simple social teachings of Jesus, his every day practical teachings for human life in mutual relations, and we shall have a winning message for the sensible minds and hearts of country people.

8. *A Loyal Country Ministry, Adequately Trained and Paid.*

This one of the ultimate factors in our problem, perhaps the most difficult of all. Leadership is always of utmost importance in social problems. A splendid leader often brings real success out of serious difficulties. There are hundreds of such splendid leaders in country parsonages to-day. Some of the most not-

able illustrations are here in this company, and they deserve all the high appreciation and cordial recognition they have won. But when we consider our 70,000 rural ministers as a body, we find three things to be true: They are miserably paid. They are usually untrained. Their pastorates are too short to be really successful. The churches are of course more to blame for this condition than the ministers.

We must have a permanently loyal country ministry for life. Making the country ministry simply the stepping stone to the city church has been a most unfortunate custom even up to the present day. The country ministry must be recognized as a specialized ministry, fully as honorable as the city ministry, demanding just as fine and strong a man,—possibly even more of a man, for many a minister has succeeded in the city after failing in the country. The country minister must somehow get a vision of his great task as a community builder; like John Frederick Oberlin of whom we were just speaking. He must find an all-absorbing life-mission claiming all his powers and demanding his consecration as thoroughly and enthusiastically as the call to the foreign mission field. Then let him *go into it for life*, determined to do his part, a whole man's part, in re-



deeming country life and making it, what it normally is, the best life in all the world to live. Staying year after year in the same parish is the secret of success in the case of most of the conspicuously successful country pastors. Only thus can a man really become the parson of the village, a person of dominant influence in all the affairs of the people.

I am aware this ideal suggestion of long country pastorates meets with two objections. Some of you laymen are saying, "How can you expect us to keep a minister after he has said all he knows?" And some of you ministers are saying, "How can you expect us to stay on less than a living wage?" Both objections are perfectly valid. Too many ministers are untrained men and therefore fail to succeed for more than a year or two. And certainly an underpaid minister cannot be blamed for taking his family where he can support them respectably.

As near as I can determine, about 15 per cent. of rural ministers the country over (including all denominations) are educated men; though probably not over 5 per cent. of them have had a full professional training. They are about as successful as any other professional man can be who lacks his technical training for his life work. There is a great de-

mand for trained ministers. I personally receive fully 200 more requests from churches in a year than I can furnish men for. Yet the theological seminaries are training few men for the rural churches. Most of the graduates go either to the cities or the villages, where there is a living wage. Dr. Warren H. Wilson figures that a country minister with a wife and three children, in order to educate his family, keep a team and provide \$100 annual payment for insurance for his old age, must have at least \$1,400 salary. I know ministers who are able to do this on less, but not very much less. There certainly ought to be a *minimum* wage of \$800 and a parsonage, or \$1,000 cash, for every minister. A church paying less than this is simply stealing from the ministers' family. Churches unable to pay this minimum living wage ought to unite with a neighboring church or close their doors, except for itinerant preaching.

#### 9. *A Liberal Financial Policy.*

This reminds us very forcibly that one factor essential to country church success is *a liberal financial policy*. In the smaller country churches we seldom find any business policy; no plan at all for the future. Their short-sighted method is just the short-haul on the

pocket, and inefficiency of course results. The most common plan is the annual subscription paper, with special subscriptions for repairs or emergencies. The motive is apparently strict economy rather than efficiency. It never pays to run a cheap church, for it cheapens the whole enterprise. More and more the weekly-payment pledge system is coming into use and with it a careful planning of the budget at the beginning of the year, guided by an earnest purpose to keep the church business-like, the minister promptly paid, the property well in repair and the enterprise spiritually successful. Often the new consecration of the pocket-book has been the first symptom of a thorough-going revival.

#### *10. Adequate Equipment.*

A large proportion of country churches are simply one-room buildings. This explains many failures. In order to serve the community at all adequately, the church must have social rooms for a variety of neighborhood purposes, and it must make provision for its Sunday School. About four-fifths of the boys and girls in the Sunday Schools of America live in the rural districts. They should be given good rooms. Without an effective building for social and educational purposes,—a parish house or at least a vestry,—the country church is serious-

ly handicapped. With a good equipment the church often becomes the social center for the whole neighborhood.

*II. A Masculine Lay Leadership Developed and Trained.*

It takes more than a minister to make a church successful. The King's Business requires MEN. Women are usually active and loyal. The men often are just as loyal but less active because of lack of opportunity. The most enthusiastic meetings I have attended for months were in a rural county in Michigan, a county without a trolley. The meetings were held for three days under the auspices of the Men and Religion Forward Movement and all the 45 Protestant churches of the county were represented by ministers and laymen. The laymen outnumbered the ministers about ten to one and they showed the keenest interest in the proposition to make the work of religion in their county a man's job. Those men caught the vision of service.

That was two months ago. There are now being held, every month during the winter, meetings led by laymen in every school house of that whole county, carrying the five-fold message of the great Men and Religion Movement into every rural neighborhood; the messages of

personal evangelism, of definite Bible study, of world-wide missions, of social service to better their community, and personal work to save their boys. This is a program of religious work for MEN. Only men can do it; but men *can* do it, with a little training and wise leadership. The results no man can foretell. But it must result in great blessing for the men and for their communities, and new efficiency and appreciation for their country churches.

12. *A Community Survey to Discover Resources and Community Needs.*

Without multiplying further these factors which make for efficiency, I mention but one more. Until recently country churches have been conducted on the principle that "human nature is the same everywhere," and "one country village is like all the rest." But scientific agriculture has suggested to us that we must make a scientific approach to our church problem as well as to our soil problem. Country communities are *not* all alike,—far from it. Social, economical, moral, educational, political, personal conditions vary greatly in different localities. Churches miss their aim unless they study these conditions. There is in progress now a religious survey of the entire state of Ohio. Quite a number of coun-

ties in Pennsylvania, New York, Missouri, Indiana and elsewhere have been carefully studied for religious purposes. As most of my hearers doubtless know, reports of these studies are available as guides for similar work elsewhere.

The general purpose of the survey hardly needs to be defended. It is simply the application to the work of the church of the modern social method of finding the facts in order to prevent wasted effort, in order to utilize all available resources and minister to all real human needs. It augurs well for the church of the future.

We have every reason to hope that with the progress of the great Country Life Movement the Country Church will come to a new day of usefulness; with people living under modern conditions, with local prosperity and progressive farming, with their communities well socialized and co-operating, with a community-serving spirit in the church, guided by a broad vision of service and program of usefulness; with united Christian forces and decreasing sectarianism; with a loyal country ministry adequately trained, and sustained by a liberal financial policy; with an adequate equipment making the church a social center; with an enthusiastic masculine lay leadership developed and guided by a community

survey to undertake the work which will best serve the needs of their people, the Kingdom of Heaven will surely come. It sounds like the millenium! perhaps it will be, when it comes! But in many respects we can see it coming, as, one after another, these factors come to stay. May God speed the day of the broadly efficient country church. It will mean the redemption of the country.



## CHAPTER V.

### *What Shall the Church Contribute to the Country Life Movement?*

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K. L. Butterfield, President of Massachusetts Agricultural College.

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The genius of the country life movement is people, not things. Its leaders believe heartily in the need of economic success as a foundation upon which to build an adequate rural civilization. The status of our rural people must be satisfactory from the standpoint of material goods before we can expect it to be satisfactory from the standpoint of class influence and class success.

But the country life movement gets its impetus from the desire of the people themselves to realize the higher ends of living. The welfare of men and women is of greater significance than the increase of productivity considered as a thing apart.

Now whatever our religious notions may be, most of us will admit that if we are to seek the welfare of the rural peo-



ple we ought to seek their highest welfare. And we will admit that their highest welfare must be the outcome of their highest aspirations. Hence, the crucial test of the country life movement is the quality of the ideals which it seeks to realize in terms of the welfare of individuals and communities.

The ideals of the human race have sprung from any sources, but a Christian civilization can hardly ignore the origin of its idealism. The ideals of Jesus represent the highest aspirations of our Anglo-Saxon civilization. And it must be remembered that these ideals have been conserved and cherished and promulgated chiefly by the Christian church.

It is possible that in the future we may find a better idealism than the Christian idealism. It is possible, and indeed probable, that the church of the future may not be so exclusively as in the past, the guardian of our ideals, but at the present time, we have no institution that compares with the church and its allies. The Christian church is still the most effective teacher of idealism.

The logic of all this reasoning, therefore, is that the church's chief contribution to the country life movement is to furnish adequate and satisfying ideals

for that movement. If the country church cannot do this it is pretty sure to lose its hold on our rural civilization. And conversely, our rural civilization is likely to suffer if that institution, which for centuries has been the special guardian of idealism, shall be no longer effective. Let us consider some of these ideals which the church shall contribute to the country life movement.

1. The church should contribute the dominating ideals of personal life in the rural community.

1. The first of these dominating ideals is the ideal of righteousness. Doing the right thing is fundamental to personal integrity and personal growth. A righteous community is the only sane environment for a righteous individual. Righteousness must be interpreted from age to age in terms of existing but changing conditions. Probably the most fundamental contribution which the church can make to the country life movement is to interpret to the rural people day by day, and year by year, line upon line, precept upon precept, the fundamental righteousness of life.

2. The church should also contribute as a dominating ideal of personal life the thought of personal growth as a great duty. The church, I fear, has tended to minimize the dignity of the

human soul and to magnify that type of humility which would make mere worms of us all. The human soul cannot well be conceited as it stands before the mountain heights of universal mystery. The summits are beyond human ken. On the other hand, what excuse is there for the completion of a human life? What hope is there for immortality except that man's destiny is to grow eternally? The increase of knowledge, the development of intelligence, the enlargement of manhood, the gaining of keener insight into the meanings of things, the mounting of aspirations, the enlargement of spirit, are the only things really worth while. It is a man's duty to grow, and the church should insist that the farmer must somehow find, in his business and in his methods of life, the means, or power, of personal growth.

3. Another dominating ideal of personal life for the rural man and woman is the appreciation of the rural environment. What does nature mean to the tiller of the soil? Does it mean a fiend, an enemy, or does it mean a friend? Shall the farmer be a fatalist and accept with weakened will the chances of the weather and the season? Do all these processes and beauties that surround the farmer at his work mean anything to him as a human soul? Is there such a

thing as the poetry of rural life? Does the farmer get out of his surroundings intellectual and spiritual food? Do his surroundings contribute to his growth and to his righteousness? Does he understand the movement of the stars? Does he appreciate the resurrection of the spring time? Does the winter's frost preach a sermon of leisure and meditation? The country church should enforce the lesson that out of his surroundings the farmer must get joy, development, aspiration, growth, righteousness.

*II.* The church should contribute to the country life movement also the ideals of brotherhood. As the country people live together, they ought to live together in the spirit of brotherliness. This means justice in the dealings of individuals, kindness of attitude and judgment, helpfulness in service. The personal life cannot come to its full fruition if it be a self-centered life. It must have a neighborly attitude toward others or else it becomes warped and shriveled. There is much of this brotherliness in all farming communities, but there is also criticism, censoriousness, bickering, injustice, unkindness, selfishness. So long as these things exist the church has a mission in attempting to break down all prejudices and passions

that keep men from the brotherly life. The rural community gives chances, perhaps beyond any other community, for the expression of the brotherly feeling. The people have so much in common. They ought to have a common instinct of service to one another.

*III.* The community-idea, or ideal, is rapidly coming to dominate the country life movement. It is an expression of the thought that we must hold in mind the common welfare and not merely individual welfare. It represents the best good of all. We trust that ultimately this means the same thing as the best good of each. It means temporarily that each is to sink an apparent good in order that the common good may be realized. This community-idea has undoubtedly sprung into existence from that spirit of social welfare which is so characteristic of our time. Unquestionably it had its origin in Christian teaching. The church ought, then, to contribute to the country life movement the very highest type of community-idea. It should enforce the thought that the institutions of the country community, like the school, the grange, and the church itself, should seek the welfare of the community and not their own aggrandizement. The community-idea leads naturally to the thought of community building as the

great purpose of the country life movement. The country life movement does not intend merely to help individuals here and there, but it means to secure thousands of rural communities dominated by the ideals of brotherhood, justice kindness, helpfulness,, peopled by individuals whose lives are dominated by thoughts of righteousness, personal growth, love of the open country. On the basis of an intelligent and successful agricultural business the country life movement would have erected a community life at once strong, closely-knit, aspiring, efficient. Better than any other institution the church may contribute the highest ideals of community life. And the reason for this is found in the fourth contribution of the church to the country life movement; namely,

*IV.* The religious motive, or ideal. The ideals of men may be governed by various motives. Fundamentally most of these ideals are essentially religious. They all ought to be consciously religious. Country life can hardly develop to its full proportions until the people of the country realize their partnership with God. The farmer deals, at first hand, with the native forces of the universe—heat, light, air, sunshine, and the lower orders of life are his constant allies and companions. His whole task

industrially is to manipulate these forces. The church must preach that these forces are simply God's method. This partnership between man and God is absolutely essential to the continuance of human life on the planet. Hence, the farmer occupies a place of unique sacredness. His vocation is founded on his partnership with God.

But the same religious motive should mold him in his efforts for community building, because a righteous and friendly community is in itself the Kingdom of God on earth. Just as the task of the farmer is not merely to make a living, but to live a life, so his objective is not merely to feed his family but to create righteous and friendly communities of human beings. Hence, the farmer as a member of his community is also a partner with God. And it is only as he realizes this partnership in the double task of supplying food and community building that he gains his greatest efficiency, either as a worker or as a man. The church, then, should constantly hold before the country people this religious motive of life; namely, that the farmers are workers together with God, both in the work of the farm and in the common life of all.

V. Finally, the church shall contribute to the country life movement a

consecrated leadership. As in all other realms where human progress is involved, personal leadership is the key to the country life movement. This leadership ought to be a consecrated leadership. Because the task is a difficult one we need this consecrated leadership both in the pulpit and in the pew.

Probably there is no work lying before the country clergyman that so well sums up his opportunity as that of leadership in rural community building. He is the preacher of idealism. He is the prophet of a better life for the individual and the community. If the church is to minister to the righteousness and growth and enjoyment of individual farmers, the preacher himself must be the leader. If the church is to foster the ideals of neighborliness and brotherhood, the preacher must be the exemplar and leader. If the church is to enforce the community-idea, the preacher must lead the way. If the church hopes to make farmers realize their partnership with God, the clergyman must transmit the vision. If the men in the pews are to consecrate themselves to the best leadership in the country communities, they must get much of their inspiration from the preacher.

But the preacher is not the only leader. The farmer himself as individual, as citizen, the teacher in the school, the house-



keeper in the home, all, in fact, who have ideals beyond their fellows and power of personality, must become leaders.

The country church movement is rooted in the belief that rural life in America must be made more prosperous, more satisfying. The fruitage of the movement is to be determined largely by its ideals. The church, as the champion of the highest and richest idealism that the world has ever known, can contribute more than any other institution, therefore, to the richest fruitage of the country life movement, by promulgating the dominant ideals of personal life, by cherishing the spirit of brotherhood, by enforcing the community-idea, by cultivating the religious motive, and by training a consecrated leadership.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *The Farmer's Task.*

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K. L. Butterfield, President Massachusetts Agricultural College.

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The primary task of the individual farmer is to make a living for himself and his family. This task is a fundamental duty. The opportunity to make a living comes pretty close to being an inherent right. The machinery of civilization is clumsy and poorly adjusted if it does not give this opportunity to every man. As the standards of living change from generation to generation the question,—what constitutes a living?—will be answered differently; but it must always be answered in terms of reasonable satisfaction with respect both to what economists call “material wants” and “culture wants.”

Furthermore, the culture wants of man can be satisfied only when the material wants are reasonably satisfied. A cultural civilization can be built only on

the foundations of reasonable material prosperity. Therefore, the economic success of the agricultural class conditions in the main the quality of the more spiritual superstructure. Better farm business must precede better farm living. The farmer's duty to make a living is, therefore, not only a personal obligation to himself and his family, but it is also a primary duty to society. He must "pull his own weight," as Mr. Roosevelt has so often said. He can contribute to a better rural civilization only after he has contributed to his own economic success.

The second task of the farmer is to live a life. The only rational excuse for making a living is in order that the man himself may develop as a man. If he merely makes a living, or if he makes a living at the expense of his manhood, why should he cumber the ground? If the farmer cannot both make a living and live his life to the full, there is maladjustment somewhere. If the farm business and the life in a rural environment do not give a fair chance to a man to grow intellectually, morally, spiritually, to the full stature of manhood, then something is wrong with that business and life, or else there is something wrong with the farmer himself. No one can question the possibilities of a coun-

try life for the development of the full man. The farm business itself calls for high intelligence, broad knowledge, keen judgment, personal initiative, thoroughness. No man can be a successful farmer unless he possesses all of these qualities to a considerable degree. In the main, the moral incentives of country life are good; and, of all men, the farmer ought to be spiritually-minded because he deals so intimately with these forces and laws that we believe are merely expressions of the divine purpose and method.

What the farmer should achieve for himself in the way of personal growth should be achieved also for his children. A part of the farmer's task is to bring up a family of children in such a way that physically, mentally, morally, they not only have a fair start in life, but have also an unusual start, because rural life, rightly lived, is the ideal background for the education of youth.

What has been said of the man and the children applies with even more force to the woman. I have come to believe that the status of the farm homemaker is the real test of our rural civilization. Does she have a chance to live her life? Does she have an opportunity to grow mentally and spiritually? Can

she do something more than help to feed and clothe her household? Evidently the farmer's task includes something far more than merely making it possible for himself and the members of his family to subsist. He must do more than this. He must make it possible for himself and the members of his family to live a life that approximates the ideals of human welfare and destiny.

The farmer also has a task in the fulfillment of a trusteeship. Morally he is not his own master. Society has given to him the right of control of a parcel of ground, the common heritage of the race. God-given and divinely blessed. But that right implies obligations, and increasingly so under modern conditions. In America we are rapidly approaching a time when the non-producers of food will exceed the producers of food. The farmer must raise the wheat that makes the bread for these hungry millions. The old ditty is not mere words, "The farmer feeds us all." City dwellers must have good food at moderate prices. The farmer is trustee of nature's forces in behalf of an adequate food supply for the human race. He is the steward of the Great Husbandman. He cannot live to himself alone.

And he is trustee not merely for the present generation, but for the future.

For him life's fitful fever will soon be over. Others will till the land that he has used. He must pass on, to future generations, this land of his with fertility undiminished. He has no right to rob the soil. His obligation is not only to his sons but to his sons' sons, and to future consumers as well.

We may pass laws to conserve the natural resources of forest, water power, and mine, but the greatest resource of all the food plant which is packed away in the soil—can be conserved only through a fulfilled trusteeship on the part of the man who tills that soil.

Greater than the soil, greater than food and clothing, are the man and woman whose task it is to raise the food and provide the raw materials for the clothing. The farmers must live together in communities. These communities form an important part of our common national life. If that national life is to be thoroughly wholesome, it must be wholesome in all its parts. We cannot purge the cities of evils and still have moral sewage carelessly distributed in the country. It is not enough that the farmer makes a living for himself or even that he lives his own individual life in a self-satisfying way, or even that he realizes his trusteeship of the soil. If we cannot build a strong, co-operative,

alert, satisfying neighborhood life in the rural region, we have not attained the levels where we can hope to dwell in safety.

In order to build this strong rural community at least four requirements are imperative:

1. There must be the best use of every acre of land. Every acre should contribute its maximum capacity of service to human need. Every acre must be so used by the man who works it that it will yield not only a reasonable profit to him but the highest and fullest satisfaction to all.

2. There must be co-operation for all good ends. No neighborhood can live its full life unless there be present a spirit of co-operation, and unless people actually do work together for common ends. If the individual keeps before him only his own benefit, his own growth, there can never be an adequate rural life. In order to have a highly developed community, there must be a community of interest and labor. The good of all must be conserved as well as the good of each.

3. Convenience and beauty must play their part in the rural community. Convenience in order that unnecessary labor may be avoided, and beauty in order that

the rural life may minister to the higher part of the nature.

4. There must be strong, alert institutions. Society is very much dependent upon those social institutions that have come down to us as an expression of common need. In the country the school, the church, the farmers' organization—each has work to do, and if any part of the work is neglected the community suffers.

Each of these institutions must, however, strive not to build itself up as an institution merely for the sake of its own prestige, but must, in season and out of season, strive for the welfare of the community. It must minister to common need, develop common aspirations, seek the common welfare. The school must be the centre of knowledge; the church, the centre of idealism; the farmers' organization, the centre of class power.

Now each farmers' task is to do his part in making the best use of every acre that he has under his control; of working with his fellows for all good ends; of assisting to make all community life more convenient and more beautiful; of sharing with others his time and energy and money in maintaining strong, alert communities.

And finally, the farmer's task is to help solve the problems of the community.



The farmer is interested in government, not merely for the sake of the farming class, but for the good of the nation at large. His attitude towards state and national legislation must be governed not merely by his own interests but by the national welfare and advantage. The farmer, in common with other citizens, must seek to lend his support to every effort that will make for justice, righteousness, and peace.



## CHAPTER VII.

### *A Sunday School Worker's View of Rural Problems.*

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By Franklin H. Beckwith, Field Worker  
N. Y. S. S. Association.

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In this brief article I shall endeavor to give you my personal deductions made from first hand experiences. The rapid growth of the city with its industrial and social advantages, has gradually attracted the young life from the farm. These farms are now occupied by old people, by those who take little or no interest in the religious life of the community, or by those who hold different religious views and refuse to co-operate with those who are struggling to keep alive the spark of religious life in the community.

This struggle is very short sometimes and the community soon becomes ungodly and heathenish. Sabbath day desecrated by all kinds of labor and sports, family altars neglected and the Bible scarcely ever used.

I have found many such neighborhoods in New York State as I have canvassed in the interests of the New York State Sunday School Association from Lake Erie to the Berkshire Hills and from the Pennsylvania State Line to the Canadian Border. Every county visited has one or more of these needy neighborhoods.

People living in such communities are themselves largely to blame for existing conditions and yet they are powerless to work out their own salvation. They need a missionary or the influence of some outside force to evangelize, organize and educate them.

The denominations cannot lift themselves out of this difficulty unless they co-operate and the time has come when the church must co-operate or go out of business.

A union Sunday School might be organized which would give temporary aid, but a more definite and permanent work is needed. A Sunday School that is a mere moral training school is a failure, the school cannot profitably exist without the church and every officer and teacher ought to be a member of some Christian Church.

Best results have been obtained where following methods have been used: *House to House Visitation* is necessary

to discover exact conditions. Information gathered from the field is invaluable, if taken from statistics it is very misleading. Even denominational annual reports are incorrect. I found a church reporting 151 members, when actually they only had 91 resident members. Two years ago I found a school district where there was only one child of school age, they had no day school or Sunday School either. This last year both have been organized and regular church services are maintained, all made possible by families with large number of children, moving onto the farms.

*Evangelistic Services* are necessary to revive the old indifferent Christian and give the young people an opportunity to decide for Christ. I found a good Methodist brother that walked three miles each Sunday afternoon to preach to a small handful in the school house. All efforts had failed to start a Sunday School. His predecessor had let the work die and the field was abandoned. However, after this brother had held two weeks revival meetings he had sufficient officers and teachers and the little school-house well filled each pleasant Sunday afternoon.

After the community had been thoroughly canvassed, evangelistic services held, the church and school re-organized,

with its *Cradle Roll* and *Home Department*, with good superintendents and visitors to keep alive the new-born interest in the homes of the community, and extend the Pastor's Parish. After all has been done to evangelize and organize, some systematic plan of education must be formed, first and best is the *Denominational Literature*. Place the very best in the hands of your teachers and scholars not only to educate and train the present workers to become better workers but also educate and train the next generation to successfully fill the places rapidly being made vacant by the death of the faithful pioneers.

Then an *Interdenominational Association* should be organized in the township or district of all the Sunday schools that can easily and naturally come together and hold semi-annual or annual meetings.

Through these democratic gatherings Pastors, superintendents and other workers are encouraged by becoming better acquainted with each other, discussing common problems and learning new methods.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *An Inspiring Example of Successful Country Church Work in the State of Illinois.*

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The address given by the Rev. Matthew Brown McNutt, at the recent "New York State Country Church Conference," has been published and copyrighted, so that we are not able to give it in full. However, in this chapter we will outline the work, as told by this very successful Rural Pastor. The address in full may be procured from the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, 156 Fifth Ave., New York. The price is 5c postpaid.

The DuPage Presbyterian Church, Plainfield, Ill., is one of the oldest churches in the state. When Mr. McNutt was called to this church, he found them quite discouraged, the church property in a neglected condition and everything badly run down. The pulpit had been supplied for 3 years by one of the elders who was a farmer. No one had united with the church for 5 years.

The only service the church attempted was on Sunday for preaching and Sunday School. On the other hand the people were thrifty and wealthy.

In carrying out his plans he undertook the following: Organized an old-fashioned singing school. This proved a great "hit." Out of it came, a chorus choir, a male quartette, ladies quartette, an orchestra and some good soloists; and in addition to that, it improved the singing in church, and Sunday school 100 per cent.

He organized a gospel chorus to sing in the homes of shut-ins'. He encouraged the athletic association, that already existed; arranged for socials, (not the money-making kind) where attention was given to backward youths, and strangers.

The women had a missionary society. A girl's mission band was organized; also a young men's bible class. They conducted a lecture course; and a bureau of publicity; having a printing press, and they issue a local church paper; while as an aid in spiritual work they conduct services in a grove during summer; and in school houses during winter; and in the pastor's absence take charge of the regular service.

They have the pledge system of finance for local work, and benevolences; their

ideal in finances being a pledge from every man, woman and child.

During the last ten years this church had built a \$10,000 church edifice; remodeled the manse, and otherwise improved their property. They have increased the pastor's salary 40 per cent.; and given \$5,270 to benevolences.

They have had no evangelistic services, but employ the one by one method. Great care is taken to press the claims of Christ on the young, particularly so in the Sunday school classes. They have few people in the parish over 10 years and under 21 years who are not in church.

They have a very fine modern church having 14 rooms. The underlying principles of these methods are summed up as the church should be a ministering institution. It must serve the whole man physically, mentally and spiritually. Distribute responsibility; and get everybody busy.







Scotch Presbyterian Church, Waddington, N. Y.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *A Splendid Example of Successful Rural Church Work in New York State.*

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In the year 1908 the Rev. Jas. Robertson celebrated the 25th year of his pastorate of the Waddington Scotch Presbyterian Church. This eminently successful church is located in the country. Its membership is made up of well-to-do farmers and their families.

During the quarter of a century the pastor was never absent from his pulpit on account of sickness.

During this time 310 had been received into the communion, eleven elders had been ordained and one installed.

One hundred marriages had been performed, 107 of the contracting parties being members of the church.

During this period \$32,500.00 had been contributed for congregational purposes and about \$26,000 for benevolences, which with \$11,000 for the present house

of worship erected in 1891 makes a total of \$69,000.00 contributed for all purposes during this period.

The Sunday School was well organized when he came here with 234 members and 19 teachers, 8 of whom are now dead, 5 not teaching, 3 in other churches, and 3 still teaching, namely, Geo. F. Rutherford, Mrs. Ruth A. Rutherford and Mrs. James S. Fife. The present grading of the Sabbath-school was effected after the erection of the new edifice, since which time Miss Gertrude Fisher has been primary teacher. The teachers have been of great help to the pastor in preparing the children for an early confession of their faith in Christ and an early union with the church. Less than six young people between the ages of 12 and 20 are unconnected with the Church, whose parents are members. Our Sunday-school comprises the entire congregation, old and young. At the present time we have 13 teachers and 243 scholars.

The pastor's Bible class, which met on Friday evening in the early part of the pastorate, gave place to the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor. The subjects treated in the Bible class were justification, sanctification, the Lord's Supper and baptism and the doctrine of

the atonement. Essays were written by some of the members and then these doctrines were discussed. There were 60 members with an average attendance of 30, and two of the members are now ministers of the gospel.

The Ladies' Missionary Society was organized Aug. 11, 1885. On account of the congregation belonging to Brockville Presbytery, the work of the Society was on behalf of the negroes, supporting a negro girl pupil in school. In 1891, when the Church entered St. Lawrence Presbytery, the Ladies' Society became an auxiliary to the Presbyterial and have been interested with them in their work, namely, home and foreign missions. Their contributions are included in the total for benevolences named in the foregoing.

Every dollar of money raised throughout the entire 25 years has been by voluntary contributions, and not one cent by speculation, such as paid entertainments, sociables, etc. This Church needs no Ladies' Aid Society.

The following statement will go far to show that the country pastor need not be isolated nor fail to win recognition in the more general work of his church.

Besides the work in the local Church the pastor has been chairman of the Syn-

odical Committee and by virtue of that chairmanship a member of the permanent committee on Synodical Home Missions, and a member of the executive committee of the State Sunday-school Association.

Besides the work in his parish the pastor is filling a career of unusual usefulness and influence in the activities of presbyterial and synodical association. For 15 years he has held the office of chairman of the Committee on Synodical Home Missions, by virtue of which office he is also a member of the Permanent Committee on Synodical Home Missions. 5 years ago he was appointed one of a committee of five to revise the synodical plan of home missions, which plan was submitted to the Synod and adopted. His chairmanship of the Adirondack mission work entails a large amount of personal attention besides much correspondence. He has been a member for some years of the New York State Sunday-school Association, being chairman for the fourth district comprising eleven counties. He also is secretary-treasurer of the local district S. S. Association. None of these are sinecures, as he attends faithfully to the duties of every office which he accepts. In 1902 he was a delegate to the International Sunday-school Association at Denver and in 1903 a commissioner to

the Presbyterian General Assembly at Los Angeles.

This information was culled from a copy of the Madrid Herald, mailed to us by this modest minister of the gospel in response to our request for information.

But to show the methods (which were both conservative and spiritual) which he employed we take the liberty to quote from his letter as follows:

"I might call your attention to the fact that I rarely allow any of our children to reach the age of fourteen without dealing with them personally in relation to their making a public profession of their faith in our saviour. All our evangelistic work is done by hand picking before they are out of their teens.

"The fathers and mothers attend Sunday school which meets before the morning service and they all wait with their children for the church service; this is the secret of our being able to keep young men and women in the Sunday school. We have children attending church service who would cry themselves sick if they had to stay at home from any of the services.

"Of course we have not *all* received our *wings* yet, but the only means we use for their development is *just the*

*regular* Christian work of a normal church.”

Facts to remember:

The spiritual life was emphasized rather than the social and yet they enjoy a good social life.

The Doctrine of Atonement was kept before the people.

Every Dollar was raised by voluntary contributions.

Parents attend Sunday school with their children. Young people urged to make a public confession of faith in Jesus. Personal work the pastor's method of evangelism.

Nothing sensational just the regular work of a normal church.





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